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Washington Wizards's Player Gilbert Arenas Pleads Guilty to Felony Weapons Charge

WASHINGTON - Gilbert Arenas, a 28-year-old member of the NBA's Washington Wizards, has pled guilty to a felony charge of Carrying a Pistol Without a License, U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips and Metropolitan Police Department Chief Cathy L. Lanier announced today. The guilty plea follows an investigation in which it was determined that Arenas had brought four firearms to the Verizon Center in December 2009. On December 21, Arenas placed the firearms on the chair of a teammate with a note stating, reportedly in jest, "PICK 1." This incident followed an argument Arenas and the teammate had on a plane two days earlier.

Arenas entered his plea this afternoon before Judge Robert Morin in the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. When Arenas is sentenced on March 26, 2010, at 2:30 p.m., he will face up to five years of imprisonment. Pursuant to the plea agreement between Arenas and the government, the government agreed that it will limit its allocution at the low-end of the applicable guidelines, which is estimated to be between 6 and 24 months, with probation, a split-sentence, or incarceration permissible.

"Playing with firearms is no joke," said U.S. Attorney Phillips. "Today's guilty plea to a felony count of carrying a pistol without a license reflects the seriousness and grave risk of such conduct. Such reckless action can always be expected to garner a swift and firm response from this Office. We commend Mr. Arenas for accepting responsibility and hope he fully appreciates the gravity of his actions."

According to the government's proffer of evidence, on or about December 19, 2009, during a chartered flight from Phoenix, Arizona, Arenas and a fellow teammate became involved in a verbal exchange following a card game. Although Arenas maintains that the statements he made during this exchange were made in jest, the exchange between Arenas and the teammate involved mutual threats to shoot one another. Arenas also told the teammate that he would burn the teammate's Cadillac Escalade.

On the morning of December 21, 2009, Arenas arrived at the Verizon Center, and entered the team's locker room. When Arenas entered the locker room that morning, he was carrying at least one firearm in his backpack. Once Arenas entered the locker room, he placed four firearms on the chair located directly in front of the locker of the teammate with whom he had the prior verbal exchange. Arenas then wrote the message "PICK 1" on a piece of paper, and placed it on the teammate's chair near the firearms. Arenas remained in the locker room.

Moments later, the teammate walked into the locker room and approached his locker. He saw the handguns and he and Arenas once again exchanged words. During this exchange, Arenas stated, "You said you were going to shoot me, so I thought you would like some firepower. Pick one." The teammate picked up one of Arenas's firearms from his chair, threw it across the locker room, then reportedly took out what appeared to Arenas to be a silver-colored semi-automatic handgun.

After this exchange, Arenas admitted to team management that he brought the firearms from his home in Virginia into Washington, D.C. He also told team management that the teammate also had a firearm. The teammate has since denied that he ever had a handgun. Team management directed Washington Wizards security personnel to secure Arenas's firearms and to remove them from the premises.

On December 24, 2009, following the first report to law enforcement that Arenas had possessed firearms in the locker room on December 21, 2009, members of the Metropolitan Police Department responded to Virginia, where Arenas's four firearms were surrendered to the Metropolitan Police Department. These unloaded firearms consisted of a .50-caliber Gold-Plated semi-automatic Desert Eagle with magazine; a 500 magnum, Smith and Wesson revolver; a .45 caliber, black semi-automatic Kimber Eclipse with magazine; and a 9 millimeter Browning with a magazine.

The investigation of the reported possession of a firearm by the teammate is ongoing.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Phillips praised the work of MPD Detectives Robbie Saunders, Timothy Smith, and Joseph Oh, Officer Jeff Janczyk, and Sergeant James Black of MPD's Intelligence Branch. He also acknowledged the efforts of members of his own staff including Investigators Christopher Brophy and Larry Grasso, Paralegal Kalisha Johnson-Clark, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Kavanaugh, who is handling the investigation and prosecution of this matter.

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